

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

EUR-12 EA-07 EB-07 ACDA-07 OMB-01 ARA-06 AID-05 IGA-02

TRSE-00 AGR-05 ITC-01 STR-04 COME-00 SAJ-01 NEA-10

FEAE-00 /132 W

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R 071135Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5796

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PORT LOUIS 0295

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORT PFOR US MP

SUBJECT: MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS: MAURITIAN ATTITUDES AND INTERESTS

REF: STATE 037591

1. FOLLOWING RESPONSES ARE KEYED TO PARA 7 REFTEL:

A. THIS YEAR MAURITIUS WILL BE PLAYING AN ACTIVE ROLE AS IT HAS IN THE PAST IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC-CARRIBEAN COMMON-WEALTH SUGAR PRODUCERS GROUP TO NEGOTIATE FOR THE BEST POSSIBLE TERMS FOR CANE SUGAR (VITAL TO THE MAURITIAN ECONOMY) IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE EEC, OF WHICH MAURITIUS IS AN ASSOCIATE MEMBER AS A SIGNATORY OF THE LOME CONVENTION. IN JUNE-JULY THIS YEAR MAURITIUS WILL HOST THE OAU MINISTERS AND SUMMIT CONFERENCE, AND IT IS ASSUMED PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM WILL BECOME THE NEXT OAU PRESIDENT BY VIRTUE OF HIS POSITION AS HEAD OF GOVERNMENT OF HOST COUNTRY FOR UPCOMING MEETING. WE HAVE DETECTED NO INTENTION BY GOM SO FAR TO SEEK NEXT VACANCY FOR AFRICAN SEAT ON UN SECURITY COUNCIL, ALTHOUGH THIS CANNOT BE ENTIRELY RULED OUT AS A POSSIBILITY. HEALTH MINISTER WALTER HAS

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REPORTEDLY RECEIVED BACKING OF AFRICAN REGIONAL GROUP IN

WHO AS THAT GROUP'S CANDIDATE FOR NEXT WHO PRESIDENT. MAURITIAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DEPUTY SPEAKER GUJADHUR HAS BEEN ELECTED CHAIRMAN OF COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION, WHICH WILL HOLD ITS NEXT ANNUAL MEETING IN MAURITIUS THIS SEPTEMBER. MAURITIUS GENERALLY SUPPORTS NON-ALIGNED CONSENSUS ON MOST ISSUES WITH A STRONG PREDILECTION FOR MODERATE POSITIONS AND CONSISTENT PREFERENCE FOR SOLUTIONS TO MAJOR PROBLEMS THROUGH "DIALOGUE" RATHER THAN VIOLENT CONFRONTATION. ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN ISSUE, FOR EXAMPLE, MAURITIUS STANDS AS FIRMLY AS ANY NON-ALIGNED COUNTRY AGAINST APARTHEID AND RACISM, BUT IS ANXIOUS TO MAINTAIN ITS MAJOR COMMERCIAL RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA AND TO CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE TOURIST TRAFFIC FROM SOUTH AFRICA WHICH IS VERY IMPORTANT TO MAURITIAN ECONOMY. (RAMGOOLAM ANNOUNCED RECENTLY HE WOULD BE WILLING "TO DIALOGUE WITH THE DEVIL" IF NECESSARY RE SOUTH AFRICA.) DESPITE REPEATED PRESSURES FROM MANY NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY IN AFRICA AND OAU, MAURITIUS IS ONE OF VERY FEW AFRICAN REGION COUNTRIES WHICH HAS NEVER BROKEN RELATIONS WITH ISREAL AND THERE IS NO SERIOUS INDICATION SO FAR THAT MAURITIUS IS LIKELY TO DO SO. RAMGOOLAM HIMSELF IS ONE OF THE MOST SENIOR MEMBERS OF SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL AND SEEKS TO MAINTAIN CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH LEADERS OF SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL, E.G., WILSON OF UK, BRANDT OF WEST GERMANY, KREISKY OF AUSTRIA, MEIR OF ISRAEL. RAMGOOLAM HAS ALSO LONG HARBORED AMBITION TO PLAY LEADING ROLE AMONG INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND STATES AND HAS TOYED WITH IDEA OF HOSTING AN INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE IN CONTEXT OF ZONE OF PEACE CONCEPT.

B. IMPORTANTLY BUT NOT ENTIRELY BECAUSE OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS (I.E. INDIAN ETHNIC MAJORITY) RAMGOOLAM ADMINISTRATION HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY SENSITIVE AND SUSCEPTIBLE TO NEW DELHI'S POLICIES AND INFLUENCE ON MULTILATERAL ISSUES. FOR EXAMPLE MAURITIUS IS INFLUENCED AT LEAST IN PART BY INDIA AS WELL AS OTHER NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES ON SUCH ISSUES AS VIETNAM, CAMBODIA, KOREA AND INDIAN OCEAN. WHILE MAURITIUS HAS NEVER REALLY FELT CLOSE CULTURAL, LINGUISTIC, RACIAL OR EVEN ECONOMIC AFFINITY WITH AFRICAN CONTINENT, IT HAS INCREASINGLY

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SOUGHT TO CULTIVATE GOOD RELATIONS WITH AT LEAST MORE MODERATE BLACK AFRICAN LEADERS. RAMGOOLAM HIMSELF DOES NOT FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH SOME OF THE YOUNG RADICAL AFRICANS WHO HAVE COME TO POWER BY MILITARY COUPS. GOM IS IN PROCESS OF CULTIVATING CLOSER TIES WITH ARAB COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY WITH THOSE IN POSITION TO EXTEND SIGNIFICANT AID TO AFRICA REGION. AT SAME TIME RAMGOOLAM HAS PRIVATELY EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT ARAB COUNTRIES,

E.G. ALGERIA, ARE WIELDING EXCESSIVE INFLUENCE IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND FORA. BECAUSE OF SIGNIFICANT LOCAL MOSLEM MINORITY GOM HAS BEEN CAREFUL TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH SUCH COUNTRIES AS PAKISTAN AND IRAN -- THE LATER PARTICULARLY BECAUSE ALMOST ALL MAURITIAN OIL IMPORTS COME FROM THAT COUNTRY. NEVERTHELESS RAMGOOLAM HAS PREACHED TO ARAB COUNTRIES, INCLUDING EGYPT RECENTLY, THAT THEY CANNOT EXPECT MAURITIUS "TO GO ALL THE WAY" TO MEET THEIR POSITIONS, E.G. ON ISRAEL.

C. OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT RAMGOOLAM GIVES AT LEAST GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS TO GOM DELEGATIONS BUT DOES NOT ATTEMPT TO COVER ALL NEGOTIATING CONTINGENCIES IN DETAIL. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT RAMGOOLAM AND HIS CLOSEST ADVISORS HERE ATTEMPT TO EXERT CONTINUOUS CONTROL OVER MAURITIAN DELEGATIONS DURING NEGOTIATIONS ABROAD. WE ALSO DOUBT THAT MAURITIAN DELEGATIONS USUALLY PROVIDE REPORTS OF SUFFICIENT DETAIL AND TIMELINESS TO FACILITATE INSTRUCTIONS FROM PORT LOUIS DURING MEETINGS, ALTHOUGH IF AND WHEN PARTICULARLY CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES OR VOTES ARISE MAURITIAN DELEGATIONS PROBABLY DO CONSULT BY TELEGRAM OR PHONE WITH PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE.

D. MAURITIAN UN PERMREP RAMPHUL SEEMS TO BE ONLY MAURITIAN REPRESENTATIVE ABROAD WHO HAS CONSIDERABLE DEGREE OF PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE. HE HAS ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION REPORTEDLY ARGUED SERIOUSLY WITH RAMGOOLAM'S POLICIES OR SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS. DESPITE RAMPHUL'S OCCASIONAL FAILURES TO FOLLOW RAMGOOLAM'S INSTRUCTIONS OR DESIRES WHICH HAVE SOMETIMES AROUSED RESENTMENT AND CRITICISM BY RAMGOOLAM, RAMPHUL HAS MORE OFTEN THAN NOT GOTTEN AWAY WITH HIS FREE WHEELING AND HAS FOR MANY YEARS PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN EITHER MAKING OR INFLUENCING MAURITIAN

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FOREIGN POLICY NOT ONLY IN THE UNGA AND UN ORGANIZATIONS BUT ALSO IN RELATION TO THE NON-ALIGNED GROUP, THE OAU AND OTHER MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS. WHILE RAMGOOLAM APPARENTLY CONSIDERS RAMPHUL SOMEWHAT OF A HEADSTRONG MAVERICK, RAMGOOLAM IS STILL IMPRESSED BY RAMPHUL'S ENERGY, EXPERTISE AND HIS BROAD CONTACTS AT HIGH LEVELS IN MANY COUNTRIES, EAST, WEST, NORTH AND SOUTH.

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ACTION AF-06

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E. THE PRIME MINISTER AND HAS CLOSEST FOREIGN AFFAIRS ADVISORS ARE ACCESSIBLE AND ATTENTIVE TO REPRESENTATIONS ON MULTILATERAL ISSUES. THE EXTENT TO WHICH RAMGOOLAM IS RECEPTIVE TO, OR TAKES POSITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH, OUR VIEWS IS CLEARLY LIMITED TO HIS PERCEPTION OF HIS NEED TO "BALANCE" HIS FOREIGN POLICY AS PRAGMATICALLY AS POSSIBLE ON ONE HAND BETWEEN THE MAJOR POWERS (PRIMARILY THE US, USSR AND CHINA) AND ON THE OTHER BETWEEN THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AND THE NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES. BEING ABOVE ALL A CANNY PRAGMATIST, RAMGOOLAM UNDERSTANDS VERY WELL THE NUANCES OF MULTILATERAL/BILATERAL INTER-ACTION IN RELATIONS WITH US. IN FACT HE PROBABLY INSTINCTIVELY ASSUMES THIS IN HIS DEALINGS WITH MOST COUNTRIES, AND ESPECIALLY THE MAJOR POWERS. ALTHOUGH THE GOM DOES NOT SPECIFICALLY SOLICIT USG SUPPORT IN ITS APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, RAMGOOLAM HIMSELF HAS SOUGHT AND WILL NOT DOUBT CONTINUE TO SEEK USG UNDERSTANDING FOR MAURITIAN POSITIONS AND FOR RAMGOOLAM'S FELT NEED TO WALK A TIGHTROPE ON MAJOR INTERNATIONAL ISSUES. THE GOM CLEARLY DESIRES US SYMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING FOR MAURITIAN ATTEMPTS TO PLAY A MODERATE AND MODERATING ROLE AMONG THE NON-ALIGNED NATIONS.

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2. MAURITIAN POSITION ON ANGOLA SEEMS WORTH ADDITIONAL

COMMENT AT THIS JUNCTURE: IN UNUSUAL APPARENT DEVIATION FROM HIS NORMAL CAUTIOUS AND MODERATE POSTURE AMONG THE NON-ALIGNED, RAMGOOLAM PERSONALLY DECIDED TO PUT MAURITIUS AMONG THE VERY FIRST TO RECOGNIZE THE MPLA. AFTER MPLA CONSOLIDATED ITS CONTROL HE PUBLICLY DEFENDED HIS DECISION ON GROUNDS THAT SOUTH AFRICA INTERVENTION HAD PRECEDED SOVIET-CUBAN INVOLVEMENT AND MPLA VICTORY HAS THWARTED SOUTH AFRICA AND "IMPERIALIST" DESIGNS ON ANGOLA. MORE RECENTLY INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER HERE ATTRIBUTED INDIA'S RELATIVELY BELATED DECISION TO RECOGNIZE MPLA TO REPRESENTATIONS BY RAMGOOLAM IN DELHI IN FEBRUARY. WHILE RAMGOOLAM'S POSTURE ON ANGOLA MIGHT APPEAR TO BE A TILT TO THE LEFT IN HIS FOREIGN POLICY, WE BELIEVE HIS UNDERLYING MOTIVES WERE MORE PRAGMATIC THAN IDEOLOGICAL FROM HIS POINT OF VIEW. BY JUMPING ON THE MPLA BAND-WAGON EARLY, PROBABLY THOUGHT HE COULD PLACATE THE SOVIETS (PORT LOUIS 389 PERTAINS), INGRATIATING HIMSELF WITH THE MORE RADICAL AFRICAN LEADERS AS HE PREPARES TO HOST THE OAU SUMMIT MEETING, AND MITIGATE NON-ALIGNED CRITICISM OF MAURITIAN COMMERCIAL TIES WITH SOUTH AFRICA, WHICH RAMGOOLAM KNOWS MAURITIUS CANNOT AFFORD TO DO WITHOUT.

3. DCM GEORGE HEATLEY IS DESIGNATED AS MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS OFFICER.
MANHARD

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, NEGOTIATIONS, POLITICAL SUMMARIES, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: saccheem
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PORTL00295
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760131-0248
From: PORT LOUIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760487/aaaacwpa.tel
Line Count: 248
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 37591
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: saccheem
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 JUN 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <07 OCT 2004 by saccheem>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS: MAURITIAN ATTITUDES AND INTERESTS
TAGS: PORG, PFOR, US, MP, OAU, (RAMGOOLAM, SEWOOSAGUR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006